

Parenting Our Children – Is in the Best Interest of the Nation -



**Commission Chair ...
Asked to Lead National Affiliate Development!**

The Board of Directors of the Fathers & Families Coalition of America (FFCA), in collaboration with its President and CEO, James C. Rodriguez has asked the Commission's Chair Dr. Rufus Sylvester Lynch, ACSW, to serve as a Senior Advisor to the Board in its fulfillment of its mission "...to enhance the capacity of service providers throughout the nation...so they will be better equipped to effectively serve fathers, mothers, and children." FFCA's vision for the future is that local entities (FFCA Affiliates) across the country will come together to form a networking enterprise to improve the lives of children through father involvement; capacity building assistance; and the establishment of common core standards for professionals working with Fathers. Lynch has agreed to host his first meeting with FFCA Affiliates during the up-coming East Regional Healthy Families and Fathers Conference to be held at Rutgers University, beginning July 20th and ending the July 22rd of this year.



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- quote adapted from the title of the 1996 U.S. Commission on Child and Family Welfare Report to Congress

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Where Have All the Fathers Gone?

A Macro Overview

By Debra Pontisso (MPA), Director of Institutional Advancement,
The Strong Families Commission

Compared to several decades ago, the landscape of American families has changed significantly. The rise in the number of children in female-headed households coupled with the increase in births to unmarried parents are two powerful indicators of this change. And in many instances, father absence has been the unintended consequence.

This change is the result of, or has been fueled by, a variety of other socio-economic factors including, but not limited to:

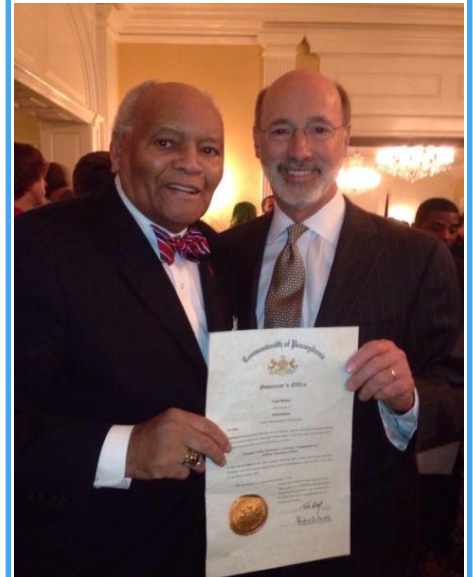


In future issues of the Commission newsletter, I will attempt to discuss these societal and economic "stressors" as they relate to father absence and child well-being.

In addition, there are institutional barriers to consider. And by "institutional barriers" I mean programs or policies formulated by federal or state governments that are devoid of a "father factor" when addressing the needs of children and families

Since I am more familiar with federal child and family support programs (e.g., 32 years with the federal Department of Health and Human Services), it has to be acknowledged upfront that Congress sets the parameters for the intended goals and places limitations on how program funds can be spent. This results in program "silos" and makes it difficult to create on-ramps to services for fathers and/or including them as part of the service response.

The good news is that there has been a recognition within federal government – particularly in the Administration for Children and Families dating back to the early 90s -- that fathers need to be included and considered as an integral part of the



Carl W. Bailey Appointed to Serve on Governor's Advisory Task Force on African-American Affairs

On February 24, 2016, Carl Bailey, former President and CEO of CWB Consulting Service, was sworn in by Governor Tom Wolf and Deputy Secretary of State Peter Speaks to serve on the Governor's Advisory Commission on African American Affairs (GACAAA).

The GACAAA was re-established under the Wolf Administration as the commonwealth's advocate agency for its African American citizens in [August 2015](#).

A primary function of the Commission is to advise the Governor on policies, procedures, legislation, and regulations that affect the African American Community. Mr. Bailey will be joined by 19 other community leaders – representing various parts of the state – to participate in the GACAAA.

Mr. Bailey is a core group member of The Strong Families Commission serving as Special Envoy to the Business, Corporate, and Philanthropic Community.

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social service response in programs largely intended to support children in single-parent households and/or other children in need. To an outsider this progress may not be so apparent but it is happening.

For example, the federal Office of Child Support Enforcement (OCSE) has proposed changes to its program regulations that, in part, would greatly benefit fathers owing child support. The big ticket items that would improve the situation of non-residential fathers are three-fold: 1) prohibit the accumulation of child support debt while a parent is incarcerated; 2) allow child support agencies to provide employment services to non-residential parents; and 3) base child support payments on actual earnings. All of these changes would positively impact the lives of fathers and their children and put an end to the unintended consequences of accumulating child support areas while parents are incarcerated.

Congress has even begun to recognize the importance of fathers by authorizing a limited number of programs designed to specifically address the needs of fathers and to increase their involvement – emotionally and financially -- in their children's lives. These statutorily-authorized programs include, but are not limited to, Pathways to Responsible Fatherhood, Healthy Marriage, and [Child] Access and Visitation Grants. This is movement in the right direction. However, the general consensus in the fatherhood community is that the funding levels of these programs pale in comparison to the demand and need for such services.

It should be noted that during his Administration, President Obama has spent considerable effort to promote fatherhood as exemplified, in part, through the creation of a Federal Interagency Task Force on Responsible Fatherhood. The result is that efforts are currently underway to incorporate a "Father Factor" into federal programs and services. For a copy of this report, go to:

www.whitehouse.gov/sites/default/files/docs/fatherhood_report_6.13.12_final.pdf

In conclusion, the short answer to the question "Where Have All the Fathers Gone" is obvious.

For every child born, there is a biological father and thus, fathers are everywhere. Some are more visible than others.

To the extent possible, it is our responsibility to pull those fathers from the shadows and bring them into the light by acknowledging the important role they play in their child's life and that they too can share in the joy and responsibility of parenthood.



News from the Nation's Capital

[A New Effort to Move Americans Out of Poverty](#)

A new Urban Institute Initiative funded by the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation

Excerpt from February 5, 2016 Announcement:

*Today, the Urban Institute launched a collaborative of extraordinary partners with an audacious ambition: **building stronger and more effective ladders of economic and social mobility out of poverty**. This independent effort, the US Partnership on Mobility from Poverty, is funded by the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation and will be staffed and supported by Urban Institute.*

The partnership is made up of a group of 24 leading experts, advocates and academics from across the country. Harvard Professor David Ellwood, former Dean of the Kennedy School of Government and noted poverty expert, is Chair. Over the next two years, these remarkable minds will work to determine what it would take to increase dramatically upward mobility for those in poverty. They will situate the challenge in the broader global economy and US context; explore structural barriers to opportunity; uncover the country's most successful programs; collaborate with outside innovative organizations to test promising new models; and identify new approaches to move more Americans out of poverty. For additional information go to: <http://www.urban.org/urban-wire/new-effort-move-americans-out-poverty>

**Good News!
Data Resources
for Practitioners
are Available**

Child Trends Data Bank
www.childtrends.org/databank/

**Kids Count: Annie E
Casey Foundation**
www.datacenter.kidscount.org

PEW Research Center
<http://www.pewresearch.org/>

**National Responsible
Fatherhood
Clearinghouse**
www.fatherhood.gov/home

**National Marriage
Resource Center**
www.healthymarriageinfo.org/

**Office of Planning
Research and Evaluation
(ACF/HHS) QUICK FACTS**
www.acf.hhs.gov/programs/opre/quick-fact

**

For a fee, FATHER FACTS

**Publication of the
National Fatherhood
Initiative**
www.fatherhood.com

Family Strengthening in Pennsylvania

Commission Taps Attorney Moore to Explore the Rights of Children to Access both Biological Parents in Pennsylvania

In December of 2015, The Strong Families Commission Incorporated, ("The Commission"), appointed Reizdan B. Moore, Esq. to Chair a Task Force on the Rights of Children to Access Both Biological Parents. Armed with a Legal Memorandum titled "Do Children Have a Fundamental Right to Access Both Parents, and a Policy Brief written to appeal to members of the legal community, policy leaders, and child well-being stakeholders, Mr. Moore and other members of the Task Force will explore the question with legislative leaders and staff from the House and Senate of the Pennsylvania General Assembly: under what conditions, if any, do children in Pennsylvania have a right to access both of their biological parents?

Background: Various data sources, including the U. S. Census and the National Fatherhood Initiative, have documented the incidence of the impact of both parents not being "present" in the lives of too many of our children.



The Annie E. Casey Foundation Kids Count data center (2015News), reported that 25 million or 35% of the country's children, live in Single-Parent families. Philadelphia statistics reveal that children who live in Single-Parent Family Households represent 60% (195,000) of the child population, as opposed to children throughout Pennsylvania that represent 35% (905,000) of the child population. Of those households, 50% are Mother only and 9% are Father only.

The National Fatherhood Initiative often references the term "Father Absence Factor" as being associated with nearly all of the social issues facing American society today. On the one hand, they argue Father Absence is associated with children living in fragile families that experience complex and interconnected marginality, and that too many children are growing-up at risk of entering, re-entering, or remaining in child welfare systems of care. While on the other hand, children with involved fathers do better across every measure of child well-being than their peers in father-absent homes.

The Commission advances the perspective that children have a legal right to a relationship with both of their parents, Fathers, as well as Mothers. Therefore, the Task Force is charged with providing a rubric for establishing the right. The Task Force will submit a status report by September 30, 2016.

Mr. Moore has recently retired from state government after having served for more than 30 years in the Pennsylvania House of Representatives as legal counsel, senior counsel, chief counsel, and Parliamentarian to several speakers, legislative leaders, and members of the House of Representatives. The Commission feels he is more than qualified to lead the Commission in its endeavor to establish the legal right of children to have access to both of their biological parents.

Funding Opportunities

Federal Social Innovation Fund Classic Notice of Funding Availability FY 2016

The Social Innovation Funds grant competition will provide up to \$39 million to eligible grant making institutions seeing to grow innovative, evidence-based solutions to challenges facing low-income communities nationwide in its focus areas of healthy futures, youth development and economic opportunity.



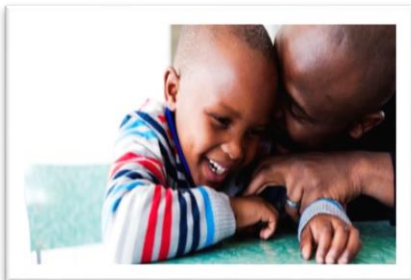
Issue Areas: The Social Innovation Fund only supports programming that targets one or more of the issue areas listed below: • Youth Development – Preparing children and youth for success in school, active citizenship, productive work, and healthy and safe lives, including crime reduction initiatives focused on juvenile delinquency and victimization prevention and response. • Economic Opportunity – Increasing economic opportunities and financial stability for economically disadvantaged individuals and families. • Healthy Futures – Improving health outcomes, promoting healthy lifestyles, and decreasing health disparities that disproportionately affect low-income communities. For further information, go to: www.nationalservice.gov/build-your-capacity/grants/funding-opportunities/2016/sif-classic-NOFA-FY16

NOTICE OF INTENT TO APPLY DEADLINE: Applicants are strongly encouraged to submit a Notice of Intent to Apply via an online form at <https://www.surveymonkey.com/r/VJ32PZS> by April 15, 2016.

APPLICATION DEADLINE: Applications are due May 10, 2016 at 5 p.m. Eastern Standard Time. Successful applicants will be notified by August 1, 2016.

News Tips

The Commission Recognizes Two of America's Outstanding Advocates for Fathers & Families



During a Public Forum at The Free Library of Philadelphia on April 5, 2016, The Strong Families Commission Incorporated will recognize and honor Bilal Abdul Qayyum, President & Executive Director of The Father's Day Rally Committee, Inc. for thirty years of service to the African American Community, especially young males, and Fathers within Families; as well as, James Rodriguez, Chief Executive Officer and President of Fathers & Families Coalition of America. Mr. Rodriguez, clearly a visionary committed to the well-being of children and families, organizes one affiliate organization at a time – educating, training, and advocating to transform how fathers are valued in our country.

Bilal Abdul Qayyum

President and Executive Director
The Father's Day Rally Committee, Inc. (FDRC)

Bilal Abdul Qayyum serves as the President and Executive Director of the Father's Day Rally Committee, Inc. (FDRC). Since 1989, FDRC's mission has been to implement grassroots, call-to-action, community campaigns in response to societal and community challenges facing African American fathers, males, and the community at-large in the City of Philadelphia and the surrounding Delaware Valley.



Qayyum, an activist born out of the '60s civil rights movement, attended Tennessee State University where he majored in Business and Sociology. His drive and leadership as a community organizer led him back to his hometown of Philadelphia where he emerged as an effective administrator and a fierce and vocal leader that led him to serve in Philadelphia's city government under five administrations – in the offices of Community and Youth Employment; Housing and Community Development; and Economic Development for the Department of Commerce – spanning 29 years.

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In 2007 Bilal walked a hundred and six miles from Philadelphia to Harrisburg, Pa. under the banner "Jobs Not Guns" In 2012, Bilal organize a National Conference on Black on Black Violence attended by over 270 participants from 19 cities. The outcome from the conference was the creation of the National Black Values Movement, a national organization focusing on reducing violence in the African American communities across America. From a corner activist to a national lecturer and the leader of FDRC, Bilal Qayyum's dedication to the Delaware Valley's community and beyond has spanned over 40 years. Qayyum and his wife reside in Philadelphia, Pa.

James Rodriguez

Chief Executive Officer and President
Fathers and Families Coalition of America, Inc. (FFCA)



Fathers and Families Coalition of America (FFCA) is a national and international agency committed since 1996 to delivering services, education, training and advocacy to make a difference in the lives of fathers and children.

Mr. Rodriguez has led FFCA to support government agencies, community-based organizations, multi-faith based leaders and researchers in the public, nonprofit and private sectors. In 2010, he expanded FFCA to create an international membership base with an executive leadership team of over 50 affiliates in the U.S., Jamaica, Australia, Puerto Rico, Africa and Bermuda. His vision to champion healthy families through increased professional development led to his spearheading the National Families and Fathers Annual Conference; National Fatherhood Practitioner & Healthy Relationship Credential and over 20 regional conferences.

Mr. Rodriguez has been awarded several recognitions for his professional service throughout the United States which include: The Presidential Lifetime Call to Service Recipient – Office of the President of the United States of America – Hon. Barack Obama; the Corporation for National and Community Services by the Points of Light Institute; Congressional Certificate of Honor – U.S. House of Representative Sheila Jackson-Lee of Texas; Proclamation of Leadership - U.S. House of Representative Maxine Waters of California; and the Certificate of Recognition - U.S. House of Representative Diane E. Watson of California.

Mr. Rodriguez retired with honors in 2003 after serving more than 20 years in the Armed Forces where he was the Director of a mental health/substance abuse program and served as a counselor. He is blessed with a wonderful family that includes his children Antonio, Amber and Jazmin, along with his daughter-in-law Cassandra.



Research Findings of Interest

Family Strengthening Report

Published by: Office of Planning and Evaluation (OPRE), Administration for Children and Families (ACF), Department of Health and Human Services (HHS)

Excerpt: *This report describes the major research investments of ACF's Division of Family Strengthening through Fiscal Year 2015. This division has primary responsibility for research and evaluation projects related to strengthening relationships within families, supporting fatherhood, nurturing children through their families, reducing teen pregnancy, supporting youth in their transition to adulthood, and preventing family violence. This report presents the research organized into six different sections, showing the breadth of ACF's family strengthening research. These sections include:*

- *Supporting Fatherhood*
- *Strengthening Relationships*

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- *Nurturing Children Through Families*
- *Supporting Positive Youth Development And Reducing Teen Pregnancy*
- *Preventing Family Violence*
- *Cross-Cutting Research and other topics*

For a copy of the full report, go to:

http://www.acf.hhs.gov/sites/default/files/opre/opre_family_strengthening_research_fy2015_web_release_b508.pdf

Training Webinar and Conferences

Fifth Fatherhood Research & Practice Network (FRPN) Webinar Scheduled: Free!

When: Tuesday, May 17, 2016
Time: 12:00 – 1:30pm EST

Most fatherhood programs seek to improve economic stability for participants: employment, earnings, child support payments and financial well-being. **A Conversation with Researchers about Measuring Economic Stability Outcomes in Fatherhood Programs** will explore how these outcomes are measured using self-reports and agency records and the challenges associated with generating reliable information. A registration link for this webinar will be posted on the FRPN website (www.frpn.org) in the coming weeks.

Federal Research and Evaluation Conference (RECS) on Self-Sufficiency

Sponsored by: Office of Planning, Research and Evaluation, Administration for Children and Families, Department of Health and Human Services

When: June 1 - 3, 2016
Where: Omni Shoreham Hotel, Washington, D.C.

The conference will focus on programs, policies and services that support low-income and vulnerable families on the path to economic self-sufficiency and well-being. The conference will feature presentations on topics including:

Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF)	Child and Youth Well-Being
Education, Training and Success in the Labor Market	Fatherhood, Relations, and Strengthening Families
Evaluating Social Programs: Building and Using Evidence	Approaches to Alleviate Poverty/Strengthen Safety Net

To register go to: <http://www.recsconference.net/register.htm>

Registration deadline for general participants is May 13, 2016.

Some of the conference sessions will be streamed live on the internet.

National Partnership for Community Leadership's 18th Annual International Fatherhood Conference

"Strengthening Parenting Relationship Assets to Improve the Well-Being of Children"

When: June 14 - 17, 2016
Where: Ewing Marion Kauffman Foundation Conference Center, Kansas City, MO

A growing body research indicates that children fair better on a variety of well-being indicators when both parents are actively involved and engaged in their lives. The 2016 International Fatherhood Conference will engage attendees in reflective yet forward looking discussions and workshops on evidenced based and evidence-informed practices, and, policies and research findings that are leading to advances in the responsible fatherhood field. To register go to:

www.fofnetwork.org/

The Strong Families Commission

Vision

- Children and youth in Philadelphia, across the state, and around the country will benefit from and grow up with the emotional, social, intellectual, spiritual, and financial support of both parents in a healthy and supportive environment

Mission

- Strengthen families and improve child well-being through advocacy designed to affect child and family policy and programs, leverage resources to contribute to the well-being of children and families, and to encourage collaboration among Philadelphia organizations and beyond that are family-focused and inclusive of fathers

Goal

- Model Philadelphia as the most Father Friendly City in America, by eliminating the systemic barriers that work against increasing father engagement in all systems of care that address the well-being of children, youth, and families. Achieving this goal can propel The Philadelphia Model of Father Integration into a successful example for the rest of the nation to emulate

Strategy

- Partner with children, youth, and family-focused agencies and systems of care to increase their capacity to include fathers in their service delivery models that are designed to improve the well-being of the children they serve

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A SPECIAL THANK YOU to everyone who made a tax deductible gift to The Commission in 2015.....

...and we *invite* anyone who wishes to support the work of the Commission to give generously and securely online -- www.thestrongfamiliescommission.com - via PayPal and/or you can mail a check to:

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Lynn Fields Harris, MPA,
Commission Treasurer

A Note from the Editor:

If you have information on best practices, research and other topics that you think readers would be interested in, please contact me – Debra Pontisso --at dpontisso@aol.com.



Debra Pontisso, MPA,
Director of Institutional Advancement